

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



AS I SEE IT

New Year's Resolutions

January 4, 2010

The start of a new year is a good time to reflect on the days past and to make new promises for the days to come. This year, I hope parents, teachers, school administrators and state and local leaders and policymakers will mark this occasion by renewing our state's commitment to providing every student in North Carolina the highest quality of education possible. As we begin the year and work on our new resolutions, let's first take stock of the tools already at our fingertips and the innovative initiatives currently underway that will be critical to improving public education in 2010.

The North Carolina School Report Card, available www.ncreportcards.org, is the state's most comprehensive collection of state-, district- and school-level data. As a superintendent, I used this resource to help keep my finger on the pulse of what was happening in the classrooms across my county. Now I use the site when I need information about student achievement and attendance, class size, school safety, teacher quality and school technology in any district or school in North Carolina. But this tool is not just for principals and education officials. Parents also should be tapping into this resource to find out how their student's schools are doing and they should use it to engage teachers and local school leaders in discussions about current challenges and possible solutions. Becoming informed consumers of public education is especially important as the deadline for applying to magnet schools in some districts approaches and parents must make crucial decisions about their children's futures. The North Carolina School Report Card Web site provides all the fact-based information necessary to help them make the best choices possible.

At the state level, work in our Accountability and Curriculum Reform Effort (ACRE) continues to move forward. New essential standards for K-12 Mathematics, English 10, the Occupational Course of Study and K-12 Information and Technology were approved by the State Board in September while the new standards in K-12 Science will be presented for our review this week. Overhauling the state's curriculum and accountability system is the most important, groundbreaking work being done in education in North Carolina right now. We have pulled in hundreds of teachers, school administrators, content and curriculum experts, university and community college faculty and many others in these efforts. While the first round of standards will not become effective until the 2011-12 school year, NCDPI staff are currently putting together communication and professional development plans and will continue to call on you for feedback and support throughout this process. We need parents, teachers and others across the state to understand and become invested in our ACRE work. Please visit www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/ to learn more.

The Race to the Top competitive federal grant program was the big national education story in 2009 and will continue to top our priority list in 2010. Thanks to all the innovative work already being done in our state, North Carolina is well-positioned to secure some of the \$4 billion available in federal grant money. This funding will allow us to continue our work in ACRE and many other areas. The state's final application will be submitted in mid-January and we are committed to working with Gov. Perdue and every superintendent in each one of our 115 school districts to make sure North Carolina emerges a big winner in this competition. To learn more about our Race to the Top efforts, you can visit <http://racetothetop.nc.gov/>.

There were many exciting things happening in public education in our state in 2009 and I look forward to celebrating even more success this year. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our resolution to make 2010 banner year for North Carolina public schools and our students.

Bill Harrison, Chairman
State Board of Education